

The Light of the World, circa 1944

I sit in a circle at the Sunday School
and Miss Dove gives me a picture to lick
and stick into my little book.
Jesus is on the cover holding a shepherd's crook.

Miss Dove tells me Jesus loves me.
She says Jesus is the Light of the World.

Every night my mother shows me
how to kneel beside my bed to pray ~
hands held together,
clean fingernails pointing up to . . .
. . . one two three four five six seven
all good children go to heaven . . .

My mother tells me
Jesus can see my dirty finger nails
even though I can't see him . . .

I copy my mother's voice and sing
. . . Gentle Jesus, meek and mild . . .
look upon a little child . . .

After sunset,
when the world has gone to bed
and little boys should be asleep,
the sirens start to scream again
and I peer through a gap
in the French window blackout

Thin white lines weave through the night
and my mother tells me they are searchlights.

I ask her, are they searching for Jesus?
and in the dark, I hear her crying.

Outside, there is thunder, a storm of red lightning,
and a blazing fireball falls to earth.

The sky explodes in golden incandescent flame
and I know that I can see Jesus,
the Light of the World.